

attack. Stripping these men and women of the ability to carry firearms in the post 9-11 environment is not right.

It is time that we address this obvious loophole in cargo security. In a maneuver that seemingly took place at the eleventh hour, the word "passenger" was inserted in the House bill's provision for arming pilots, and a similar change took place in the Senate version shortly thereafter. The effect of this single-word change is that it exempts all cargo carriers from the Federal mandate to arm pilots in a bill intended to enhance the pilot's ability to protect the airplane.

I feel that this back-room deal defies the initial intent of the bill and the will of our Congress. This body voted overwhelmingly to mandate firearms for all airplane pilots, not just those in the passenger service. We displayed our bipartisan support for this mandate with votes of 310 to 113 in the House and 87 to 6 in the Senate.

Mr. Speaker, it is time to fix this disparity and close the loophole once and for all so that all pilots in this country enjoy the same level of security.

BUSH BUDGET AND HEALTH CARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to discuss an issue important to my community, and that happens to be health care.

I am concerned by the President's health care proposal for this year's budget. The President's Medicaid proposal will not help the poor, the sick, the elderly and the disabled, in my opinion. In fact, the President's proposal weakens the health care safety net for millions, millions of people.

Currently, Medicaid is an entitlement as we know it, which means that States receive funding based on the number of people in their State who qualify for this coverage. The Bush proposal would encourage States to eliminate Medicaid funding for many people insured by the program in return for a small amount of so-called fiscal relief.

This proposal requires States to choose between short-term fiscal help and damaging long-term financial constraints. It raises out-of-pocket costs and reduces medically-necessary benefits to the poor, and it fails to address the increasing problem of the uninsured.

We have all heard from our States and our Governors about the budget cuts that they are soon going to be implementing and the impact it will have on Medicaid.

For example, in my own State of California, our Governor has proposed cutting optional programs like adult dental care, physical therapy, and diabetes management, a bill that I carried

in the House when I was a member of the Senate.

So one would think during these difficult times our priority would be on reinforcing Federal support for Medicaid programs. Instead, at this time when States are seeing rising rates of Medicaid enrollment for young children and families, this administration wants to change the rules of the game.

We have unemployment rates in my district as high as 9 percent. Nine percent. That is astronomical. And you are seeing this administration taking a position to scale back the help to the working poor and low-income families and disabled people who rely on Medicaid.

Let me be clear: I support flexibility in Medicaid programs. But to me flexibility means that the States should have the opportunity to help more people in need, to design programs which fit the needs of their residents, and to come up with creative solutions covering most of the uninsured, if not all. Flexibility does not have to mean that we put everything in block grants and cut off services.

As Chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Health Task Force, I want to take this opportunity to talk a little bit about what the Bush Medicaid block grant proposal will do to the Latino community.

Nationwide, 37 percent of non-elderly Latinos are uninsured, a rate that is double that of whites. Medicaid is a critical source of health care for Latinos. Forty percent of poor Latinos are covered by this program.

If we scale back Medicaid coverage, we are going to be scaling back the health care for many young families, Latino families; and as we know, when we scale back access to health care in the guise of saving money, it ends up costing us more in the long run. When people do not have access to doctors in order to prevent disease, we end up paying much higher costs when people have to go to the emergency room, which is happening right now in my district.

Uninsured children are 70 percent more likely than insured children not to receive medical coverage for common illnesses like ear infections. Thirty percent are less likely to receive medical attention when they are injured. It simply does not make sense to scale back Medicaid at a time when we have over 40 million people without health insurance in this country.

In addition, the Medicaid proposal in the administration's budget either largely ignores or endangers the health priorities of the Latino community. The budget misses a critical opportunity to lift the ban on health care for legal immigrant children and pregnant women.

The President's budget also reduces funding for environmental health programs at the CDC by \$2 million. These programs help us combat and prevent diseases caused by toxic substances in our neighborhoods. This is very critical

in my community, where we are faced with heavy air pollution and water contamination and we have many children facing high rates of asthma.

Bush's budget does not prioritize the well-being only of the Latino community, but of millions and millions of people. In fact, the President's budget proposal represents a substantial setback for the Hispanic Americans and their aspirations for a future that includes greater economic opportunity, quality education for their children, and access to better health care.

For example, the President's budget also fails to reform the unemployment insurance system for which many Latinos are ineligible due to the program's restrictive rules that prevent part-time and low-wage workers from qualifying for employment insurance. After all, they have earned it. They worked, but they are not eligible to receive this benefit.

In terms of education, the President proposes budget cuts in programs that have proven to lead to academic gains for Hispanics. The 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program provides funding to community-based organizations and schools to sponsor after-school programs. He plans to cut this. In his budget this year, 570,000 children will not receive this benefit.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to work with us so that we can ensure that all Americans have access to quality health care, education, and a clean environment.

TIME FOR AMERICA TO SLOW DOWN AND CONSIDER OPTIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, the recent cavalcade of events surrounding the actions of the United States in Iraq and other foreign affairs has compounded the apprehension that many have felt these last 8 months. It is time for the United States collectively to slow down, take a deep breath, step back and consider our options.

Comments I have received from constituents at home, from my Web site, as well as just simply reading the many conflicting poll results, suggest that most Americans would appreciate a reflective pause.

Terrorism is the greatest threat to Americans at home and abroad, despite the recent obsession with Iraq. Notwithstanding the performance by the Department of Homeland Security, which resembled a "Saturday Night Live" skit with talk of duct tape and plastic, terrorism is still serious business.

I am not opposed to the United States using force when appropriate. I think most of us now wish we had done so to deal with the genocide in Rwanda. Previously, I supported military action in the Balkans when some of the